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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on ways constructions of gender inform teacher education students' curriculum experiences and teaching performance in primary schools, in particular regarding a gender inclusive curriculum. The remarks of eight students from a longitudinal study were analyzed using feminist post-structural theory as a means of understanding contradictory discourses and the process by which gender relations become "normalized." By examining "taken for granted" beliefs concerning gender, students were challenged to reexamine their own values and see the importance of gender inclusive pedagogy and curriculum planning. Students were asked to explain their own understanding of gender relations, how they would address gender equity in their own classrooms, and how their course work enhanced or limited their understanding. Most students were able to demonstrate an awareness of ways gender relations were constituted in their lives and to "problematize" gender relations. Although students requested practical gender inclusive strategies for the classroom, during the interviews it became clear to the research team that providing courses and strategies might be a "band-aid" approach and so hinder students from achieving a deeper analysis. It also became clear that the researchers' commitment to feminism had made them somewhat "hard of hearing" when it came to the students and their interpretation of gender relations. (Contains 29 references.) (LH)

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'Too much talk, not enough action': an investigation of fourth year teacher education students' responses to issues of gender in the teacher education curriculum.

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Abstract

This paper reports on an aspect of a longitudinal study regarding teacher education students' beliefs and understandings concerning gender. Ways in which these constructions of gender inform the student's curriculum experiences and teaching performance in primary schools, in particular regarding gender inclusive curriculum are discussed in this paper.

Findings from the data are being interpreted using concepts from feminist poststructural theory. This theory provides a way of understanding contradictory discourses and the processes by which gender relations become 'normalised'. Through an examination of what students say regarding their own experiences of gender issues, insight is gained into the range of discourses that inform their understandings. By opening up for examination 'taken for granted' beliefs concerning gender, students were challenged to rethink and reexamine their own values, and see the importance of gender inclusive pedagogy and curriculum planning.

To what extent was the teacher education program able to take account of students' own constructions of gender and offer meaningful learning experiences around the issues of gender and education? To address this question, in this paper, we consider the diverse responses of eight students interviewed in their final year of the four year course. We asked them to explain their own understandings concerning gender relations, how they would address gender equity in their own classrooms as a primary teacher and how the course worked to enhance or limit their understandings. We also consider the implications for teacher education curriculum and pedagogy in light of these comments.

Introduction.

Between 1992 and 1995, a team of four teacher educators from the then Institute of Education, The University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia implemented a longitudinal study of students' understandings about gender issues in and through the teacher education curriculum. Funded in part by an Australian Research Council grant, this investigation aimed

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to explore the changing attitudes, knowledge and skills concerning gender issues in education of a group of students as they proceeded through the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course. Using annual surveys of all students, (n = 93 in 1995) and selected interviews with approximately 15% of the students, the research team sought to gain insights into students' changing beliefs concerning gender relations. One intent of the project was to better address gender equity issues in the teacher education program.

The call for initial teacher education courses to provide educational experiences which will enhance students' understandings concerning gender relations has been made repeatedly over the last decade in Australia. Policy documents including the *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools* (1987) and *The Action Plan for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools 1993-1997* emphasise the need for preservice as well as inservice education which will improve teaching practices and curriculum planning so as to become gender inclusive.

While such policy guidelines have recognised the importance of working with teacher education students, what has been less clear is the processes which will bring about long term change. What approaches within teacher education provide students with necessary insight and skills to see gender as an ongoing and vital factor in education? How do the practices which operate within teacher education programs work to enable pre-service teachers to challenge and negotiate their knowledge, skills and understandings about gender?

In Australia, recent research concerning issues of gender in pre-service teacher education courses include Garbutcheon Singh (1993), Poole and Isaacs, (1993), Cooper, Allard, Wilson and Hurworth, (1994a; 1994b), Cooper Hurworth, Allard and Wilson, (1996), and Allard, Bransgrove, Cooper, Duncan and MacMillan (1996). Such research identifies not only the importance of these issues but also resistances on the part of staff and students to rethinking curriculum and pedagogical practices by addressing gender relations.

Overseas, research into the importance of pre-service education programs as sites for addressing gender relations include Skelton, (1987), Coffey and Acker, (1991), Sikes, (1991), Klemp (1995) and Flintoff (1993).

Anne Flintoff, for example states:

> Despite a wide range of feminist research, arguably one of the most central gaps in our understanding of the ways in which gender inequalities are reproduced through and within education is the role of initial teacher education...To what

> extent does the [initial teacher education] curriculum help students to understand the influence of gender as a continuing and major determinant of educational achievement, but also, to what extent does the *process* of [initial teacher education] itself, reflect and reproduce gender (and race) inequalities?

In addressing the importance of process in teacher education programs McWilliams (1994: 56) argues that teacher education students should be involved in curriculum design in order for them to reflect on how their own values enter into the decisions made concerning what is taught and how it is presented. She demonstrates the importance of "research that situates the future teacher as an active agent rather than a passive agent, making meaning out of the cultural forms that impinge on professional preparation."

Over the four years duration of the research project we sought to engage with the students in an exploration of their own backgrounds and experiences. We endeavoured to use their comments as a means of making the curriculum more responsive to their various starting points. Our project, in short, was to make overt the ways in which existing gender relations become 'naturalised' and 'normalised'; and then through our teaching , to consider with our students how teachers can work to make gender relations more equitable.

As students' understandings concerning gender changed, the research team responded to their suggestions as to where and how the course could better prepare them to consider gender issues. We provided lectures, offered workshops and elective subjects around issues of gender in education. We organised action research projects in schools for the mutual benefit of the school and the students and, working through the appropriate Institute committee, ensured that criteria used for assessing the student's practicum experience included statements on their skills in the area of planning and implementing gender inclusive curriculum. Through these interventions, we explored with students the ways in which teaching practice, curriculum planning, assessment and reporting procedures could work to acknowledge the skills and contributions of women and girls, equally with those of men and boys. Whilst a consideration of gender inclusive curriculum practices does not adequately encompass the complexities of gender relations, nevertheless it proved a useful starting point for students in their attempts to consider practical classroom strategies.

Much past work in schools in Victoria on gender equity issues has focused on altering the curriculum to become more inclusive of women and girls' experiences, skills and values, acknowledging that the curriculum per se is not gender neutral but instead privileges particular bodies of knowledge, particular styles of learning, and particular forms of assessment. While it may sound 'essentialist' to identify particular subjects and/or skills as more 'appropriately feminine' or 'appropriately masculine', nevertheless

gender patterns do emerge in for example, numbers of females who elect to do humanities and arts subjects and the numbers of males who choose to do mathematics and physical education when these subjects are no longer mandated as part of the curriculum. Exploring the ways in which such 'choices' are valued or devalued, the ways in which curriculum and pedagogy work to limit or to enhance life options were central foci of this project.

Students in their third year of the course, for example, were taken through a series of exercises to help them plan, implement, assess and reflect on curriculum and teaching strategies to ensure that curriculum catered for not only the knowledge, interests, skills traditionally associated with 'the masculine', but also was inclusive of that which has traditionally been aligned with 'the feminine'.

Theoretical framework.

We found feminist post-structural theory to be useful as a means of analysing how primary education students speak about their own and others' gender relations.

We use the term 'gender relations' to refer to the complex processes of recognising, challenging, endorsing or resisting individual and collective, cultural discourses of 'feminine' and 'masculine'. We understand 'gender relations' as an attempt to summarise the ways in which subjective positions concerning 'appropriate' masculine and feminine behaviours are played out or re-negotiated in all contexts and through a variety of practices, including education.

Gender, like race, ethnicity, or socio-economic class is discursively produced. Through social practices and language, gender is constructed as a category of difference: male from female, masculine from feminine, boy from girl. Because gender is constituted as a category of difference, it also serves as a category of analysis, a way to 'make sense' of difference. However, gender as a category of difference also operates to construct difference, discursively.

Jane Flax (1990: 44) expresses the duality of this when she says:

> "Gender relations" is a category meant to capture a complex set of social relations, to refer to a changing set of historically variable social processes. Gender, both as an analytic category and a social process, is relational. That is, gender relations are complex and unstable processes ... constituted by and through interrelated parts.

'Gender' and 'gender relations' have been problematised by feminism and problematised differently by various feminist theories. In the process of 'problematising' gender relations, various feminist theories work to call into question the 'normalised', 'naturalised' assumptions made about gender.

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Poststructural feminist theory provides a means to examine and deconstruct 'the problem' of gender relations as they have been discursively produced, the ways in which the dualistic, taken-for-granted opposition of the feminine and the masculine are constituted in and through educational practices. However, gender is not 'just' a problem; gender relations are ongoing, multi-faceted, contradictory and negotiable processes, a part of every discourse whether made visible or not. To understand the ways in which students locate themselves in the discursive practices of gender, the relational categories of feminine/masculine, it is necessary to consider what discourses they draw on in order to make sense of their own beliefs and experiences. Additionally, we have endeavoured to examine where they position themselves in a range of conflicting discourses.

Poststructural feminist writers (for example, Davies, 1989, 1993; Weedon, 1987) offer insight into the ways in which individuals negotiate and resist a range of subjective positions within discourses, and 'borrow' from a variety of discursive practices to constitute their own gender identities. Davies (1989: 229) points out:

> ...the individual is not so much the product of some process of social construction that results in some relatively fixed end-product but is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate

Feminist poststructuralism argues for understanding the individual not as an object 'socialised' by various institutions into either/or dualism, that is either maleness or femaleness but rather as a subject whose beliefs and values concerning masculinities and femininities are negotiated in an ongoing manner and from a range of different, often contradictory positions.

Positions from which students negotiate their own understandings of gender relations will be informed by a range of factors including experience, age, ethnic background and socio-economic class. The 'discursive practices' of the teacher education program also work to challenge, endorse, contradict or enhance their subjective understandings of 'appropriate' masculinities and femininities.

Additionally, how the students see change within their own understandings concerning gender relations is also opened up through poststructuralist feminist theory, since change might be understood as locating themselves differently in different discourses. This enables us as teacher educators and researchers to listen to their voices in order to adapt and evaluate the course and to consider how the discourses of teacher education might operate to enhance these various understandings.

The Approach

Indepth interviews with approximately twenty students took place annually over the four years of the project. In considering the eight students discussed in this paper, we revisited and reconsidered what they had said in previous years.

Interviews were transcribed fully and the data was analysed by using a Miles and Huberman (1994) matrix. Working from this matrix, we identified a number of discourses which we found worthy of closer consideration. Thus, the data presented here is a selection of responses rather than a comprehensive reporting of all replies. While this group of eight volunteers offered a range of perspectives, because of the small numbers they can not be representative of the student group as a whole. In reporting our findings, we selected and discuss a number of recurring themes which emerged.

We treated the process of interviewing students, as not only a 'data-gathering' exercise, but also as an opportunity to engage with them in meaningful dialogue, to seek their ideas and responses and to actively listen to their critiques of the course. While such 'collaboration' is limited by the small number of students who participated in the annual interviews, many of the students we have interviewed have become involved in other aspects of the research and have been keen to discuss with us the progress and findings of the project.

In considering the student's fourth year interview comments, we found it necessary to return to their earlier interviews and survey responses in order to place their final statements into context. How do each of these students position themselves in their understandings of gender? What previous experiences did they see as significant? In revisiting their earlier responses, we have selected and quoted at some length, in order that each students ideas are explained in their own words. * Rather than presenting their ideas as seamless narratives however, we intersperse our comments with our own ideas, asking questions, interpreting from our point of view, commenting on what we found of interest.

As teachers and researchers, we, of course bring our own understandings of gender to the research. We acknowledge that our interpretations of students' comments are drawn from our individual and collective understandings as white, middle-class, anglo-celtic, educated feminists. We present the variety of student voices and our accompanying interpretations of their voices, not as finite truths but as multiple ways of knowing, ways of trying to gain a better, deeper understanding of our students' ideas and beliefs concerning gender.

This is of course a 'selection', one in which we have chosen what **we** found of importance. This may say more about our own subjectivities than about the particular students' points of view. The same interviews and surveys could be read in a number of different ways and different

'themes' could be identified. However, for the purpose of this paper we have focused on those themes that seem to recur a number of times over the duration of the project and to be found amongst a number of the students' comments.

In this paper we have used pseudonyms for the students. We begin by giving a somewhat brief biography of each of the eight students. By introducing each of the students individually, we aim to recognise their individual constructs; however, because gender relations are constructed not only individually, but also collectively, we have tried to pull together and comment on the ways in which particular discourses are endorsed by several students. We acknowledge the argument put forward by Jane Gaskell in earlier research with young women when she says,
'these young women are not passive recipients of cultural and economic imperatives but creative and active participants in the social processes making sense and making choices for themselves.' (Gaskell, 1992: 74)
So, what sense do they make of gender in their own lives? And where do they position themselves in the discourses of the teacher education program? What meanings do they make concerning gender relations and education?

The Students

Marlene was in her mid twenties when she began the teacher education course. As such, she was older than the majority of her student colleagues. Australian born, she attended a co-educational State school for her primary (grades Prep through six) and secondary (years seven to 12) schooling. She worked in full time employment as a sales assistant in a sports store and as an integration aide prior to beginning her teacher education studies. Both her mother and her father completed post-secondary diplomas.

In her fourth year, when asked to comment on her experience of gender issues within her personal life, Marlene said:

> I think people should question what they're doing and why they do it, and 'am I behaving in this way because society thinks I should because I'm a woman?' So yes, I think gender matters very much. [...] We need to really look at those two things, masculinity and femininity, and what they really mean.
>
> Having given birth to a son last December, I'm very aware of making sure that my boy has lots of experiences, and is not just forced into this male aggressive sort of stuff all the time. [Like] people saying, 'Isn't he a naughty boy?', or 'Isn't he cheeky?' you know. I'm always having to say 'No, he's a good boy' [laugh]. So yeah, a lot of that is learnt in the home I believe. (Interview 95: 2)

In these comments Marlene appears to understand gender as a dynamic process and allows the possibility of resisting dominant discourses of the feminine ('because I'm a woman'). Her description of masculinity and femininity as 'those two things' suggests that she sees them as separate states of being and possibly oppositional. Marlene appears to reject the discourse of gender as biologically determined, choosing to emphasise gender relations as social constructs. She positions herself as involved in resisting 'appropriate' femininity as defined by 'society'.

For Marlene, such resistance is immediate and personal, as can be seen by her reference to giving birth to a son in the third year of the course. In her call for a range of 'experiences' and her rejection of 'naughty' and 'cheeky' as appropriate adjectives for her son, we hear Marlene's determination to challenge traditional hegemonic discourses of masculinity. Like many primary teacher education students, Marlene endorses the belief that early childhood experiences are particularly significant in the formation of gender understandings. As a mother, Marlene sees herself as having agency in shaping her son's experiences of masculinity. Perhaps for Marlene, this is a reflection of her own childhood experiences. Four years earlier, in her first year interview, Marlene credits her own mother as playing a significant part in developing her understandings of feminism and gender equity.

In that interview, she commented that she was:

> brought up in a non-sexist home so I saw myself as an equal, regardless of what I was taught at school.... My mum is a fairly strong feminist, not in the sense that she says 'This is the way you have to live'.... but she was strong enough so I knew what her views were and how women are in society and all that sort of stuff, but she also knew that I had to make up my own mind about these things... She gave me space about that. (Interview 92: 1)

In an interview in her third year of the course Marlene discussed how gender and power relations intersect. She said:

> I think a lot of power is taken away from women to make decisions about things, and that goes back to men having the power and making the structures in which we all work, and that includes schools and ... this place [the university]...I think power, who has it, is an enormous issue for society. And especially as educators and as a woman, it is something you really have to work on. Who has got the power, in a given situation is very important, when you are talking about it in relation to yourself... (Interview 94: 12)

'Power' is central to Marlene's understandings of gender relations, 'who has it' will determine the possibilities for change. That she perceives power as held by men, 'taken away' from women suggests that for

Marlene, power is a possession, located usually within 'masculine' institutions. Her belief that women experience power as an absence could lead Marlene into seeing the feminine as always victimised. Such a discourse leaves the possibilities for change fairly limited and appears incapable of acknowledging the powerful ways in which many women do refuse, resist, and reject particular oppressive institutional practices. Given Marlene's own stated commitment to challenging established gender relations, perhaps Foucault's argument that power is better understood as 'something which circulates' rather than as a possessed 'commodity' (Foucault, 1978: 94) might provide her with a more hopeful approach. Yet, the teacher education program offered little scope to explore the ways in which issues of 'power' can be understood.

The freedom to make up her own mind, the ways in which she sees gender as negotiable and her insights into institutional structures come together in her discussion of how she understands the gender inclusive curriculum. When asked how she would address gender issues in her own teaching Marlene responded:

> You have to do it with the staff, and I think it has to be done, with the support of your principal and the other senior members of the staff. Otherwise it doesn't work, it's too hard to get it off the ground. Yeah so it has to really involve the staff, and also, once you've done it at that stage, also involve the parents in that as well. (Interview 95: 3)

Marlene takes a systemic approach to change in the area of gender, seeing the need for a whole school approach in order to bring about long-term change. She acknowledges the power of the principal and senior staff to support or resist change in this area. This recognition of the ways in which gender and power relations intersect within the school setting received little attention within the formal course; therefore we might assume that Marlene arrived at this insight on the basis of reflecting on her own life experiences.

Marlene, when asked to comment on how useful the teacher course was in enhancing her understandings of gender and education, credits the course with expanding on ideas that she already had.
She says:

> Yeah, I think they've certainly made me challenge my ideas, or I sort of had them there anyway, because my mother's a strong feminist, but going to the course, I could see that something had to be done. And if someone like me wasn't going to do it, and wasn't going to make those issues strong in my classrooms and when I'm doing curriculum and all those sorts of things, then no one was going to do it. So the course made me see that I had to do something as an individual, yeah I had to act on the knowledge I had and the knowledge that I gained during the course. (Interview 95: 2)

Marlene entered into the teacher education course with a richer understanding of the dynamics of gender relationships based on her own background and prior experiences. As a mature age student with a feminist mother she positioned herself very differently than many of her student colleagues. Our interactions with Marlene were less fraught with tensions because we shared a common commitment of the importance of gender and the complexities of social constructions. On the basis of our experiences with Marlene, it is tempting to argue that in order for gender equity to be seen as a serious issue, and to be taken up as an educational imperative, mature aged students who are able to reflect on their own knowledge and experiences of gender relations provide the most 'fertile ground' for change. However this interpretation is undercut quickly by considering our next student, Raelene.

Raelene also began the course in 1992 as a 'mature age student' of 25. She attended co-ed state school for her primary education and an all-girls' state school for her secondary education. Prior to commencing the course, Raelene worked full time as a legal secretary, as a sales and clerical assistant in her parents' small business and as a waitress. Both parents were Australian born; they were divorced when Raelene was quite young and she lived with her mother and two older sisters. Later her mother remarried.

Raelene, in her last interview, when asked to comment on how she viewed gender within personal relationships, seems to distance herself from reflecting on the personal, choosing to focus on the 'media' as an issue. She says:

> I really don't agree with the way our society projects gender. I think it's really bad the way films have male heroes, and always the men are more powerful. The woman's a girlfriend, and she's the pretty one. How come there's so many more pretty women [in the media] and they have to be pretty, they have to be skinny? It's the men who are old, ugly, fat. I think that's really bad.
>
> I don't agree with the way I've seen [some] parents bringing up their little kids, and telling the girls not to be rough, but the boys can just be rough, and they don't tell them off. I think it's important ( ) to address that.

Like Marlene, Raelene cites 'society' as the primary source for establishing gender relations. She also disapproves of 'society's' limited representations of masculinity and femininity but she seems far less sure than Marlene about possibilities for change. We heard Raelene's comments as suggesting that she views society as a monolithic structure, an external force imposing 'correct' gender relations; she seems less convinced than Marlene that gender relations can be understood as

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collective constructions, changing and changeable. If 'society' is understood as 'out there', some sort of external force, then individuals, in this view, have little power to negotiate or resist such all-encompassing constraints. Her use of the metaphor of 'projection' suggests a perspective in which individuals are likened to blank pages or an empty screen on which 'acceptable' gendered behaviours are transcribed or projected. Alternatively however, her recognition of the ways in which men are represented as 'more powerful' and her condemnation of how society supposedly operates, could also be read as an acknowledgment of the potential for change.

Her focussing on physical appearance, the *body* of the female and the *body* of the male, the ways in which gender difference is 'marked' through clothes, body shape and age perhaps suggests that she recognises the centrality of gender, in not only media representations, but also in day to day living. Raelene's comments suggest that she is aware of the ways that collective representations of 'appropriate' body image work as powerful discourses in teaching 'right' ways of being--and she disapproves ['I think that's really bad'].

She moves from commenting on the media representations to commenting on parental expectations, and again expresses disapproval for the link made by some parents between masculinity and 'roughness'. What is it that Raelene, through this comment, objects to ? Is it the limits some parents place on their daughters because they are female--or the failure of some parents to place any limits on their sons? We were unsure. However, Raelene in her earlier interviews commented at length concerning what she believed were 'appropriate' expectations concerning masculine behaviours.

In her first interview [1992], Raelene said:

> Well, because my parents are divorced, I had a very strong influence from my mother. She was a very dominating figure and she always put men down...she believed in equality between the sexes and when my stepfather came along, she picked somebody weaker than the other character, because she actually had a very strong, dominant male figure as a husband in the first place...and she brought us up completely independent, so we would never have to rely on a male. [...] It was contradictory, so it was confusing in a sense. Like she believed that men should actually, you know (pause), that men should actually do the work of the women. That women shouldn't have to be in the home and be doing all the work, etc. That there should be more equality because she believed that women did more work than what men did. [...] My mother, for instance had another child and my [step] father stayed home and looked after the child and he did everything, cooked the tea and did everything. (Interview 92: 1, 8-9)

Raelene appears to have observed closely her mother's beliefs and practices concerning what she saw as equitable gender relations. We hear a certain ambivalence in Raelene's perceptions of her mother as 'a very dominating figure' who 'always put men down' and as someone who 'believed in equality' but chose a 'weaker' partner. For Raelene, her mother's goal to raise her daughters to be completely independent, to never have to rely on a male' and the described relationship she had with Raelene's stepfather, may seem contradictory. Whilst poststructuralism argues against the meta-narrative of a unitary, coherent self, and acknowledges the possibilities of contradictory positions, Raelene's understandings of gender relations did not appear to permit such contradictory subjectivities. Her use of the phrase 'the work of the women' suggests that Raelene categorised the domestic sphere as appropriate to the 'feminine', the public as appropriate to the 'masculine'. Or perhaps Raelene 'heard' her mother's definition of equal opportunity, challenging established 'roles' as being unfair to the male.

This relationship between her mother and stepfather remained central in Raelene's comments about gender. In the second interview, Raelene retells the story of her mother in this way:

> I have a funny feeling that a lot of people have changed, but not that much. Their views are very stagnant and I believe it is because of their experiences as a child. I grew up in a single [parent] family and my mother dominated everything and when she had a man come into the house, and she married him, he had to do everything. So therefore I have adopted the other attitude that I don't believe that men should have to do everything. They can't work and cook tea and do this and do that all the time. That is too much. [...] It was her expectations that made me annoyed. [...] She only had a part time job but she still expected him to do everything. Vacuuming, putting out the washing--the whole lot. She just ordered him around all the time and he would do it. Still does to this day. So now I defend men more because of that... (Interview 93: 4-5)

Her 'defence' of men seems to be based on her perception that her mother made unfair 'demands' of her partner. Her description of her mother as having 'ordered him around' may suggest that Raelene sees this as at least unfair and perhaps inappropriate behaviour on the part of a woman, her mother. That her stepfather accedes may also be viewed by Raelene as inappropriate behaviour by a man. That the two of them may have negotiated and come to a mutually acceptable arrangement does not seem to be considered by Raelene, on the basis of her own observations.

In the same interview, Raelene also commented:

> I believe that there is too much emphasis on females taking more male roles and therefore I believe that men are going to

somehow lose out in the end if it keeps going that way as strong as it is going.' (Interview 93: 1)

Raelene, like Marlene, appears to credit her mother as strongly influential in terms of what Raelene believes about 'correct' gender relationships. Yet Raelene positions herself in relation to her mother's alleged point of view in a very different way than does Marlene. Her stated concern that men will 'somehow lose out', we hear as an expression of anxiety or fear at disrupting established 'male roles' and 'female roles.' Or perhaps there is simply an unquestioning acceptance that particular 'roles' are more appropriate to one sex than to the other.

This stated belief that men will lose out remains a dominant one in Raelene's subsequent interviews. For example, in her fourth year interview, Raelene recalled the first year introductory lecture on sexism and equal opportunity She stated that she 'didn't agree' with the lecture, believing it to be 'very aggressive and anti-men...that was a really bad lecture.' She also expressed concern for her male student colleagues, saying, 'I feel bad for those two guys in my class who when we're having a gender discussion, I feel as though they're being singled out, or something...'

What sense can we make of this? Why does Raelene feel obliged to 'defend' males or to take so much notice of the few males who remain in the course? The disapproval of the focus on gender issues that these statements seem to convey is perhaps due to her concern about how the men were feeling, and again demonstrates her determination to 'defend' the men. This defence might be seen as an extension of Raelene's belief that 'appropriate' feminine behaviours are tied into nurturing, caring for others. Alternatively, perhaps Raelene herself also felt uncomfortable with the attention being given to gender issues, because they challenged what she perceived to be 'male roles' and 'female roles'. The first year lecture to which she referred four years later focussed on the ways in which women are discriminated against and disadvantaged. As such, this aimed to call into question the 'naturalised, normalised' constructions of 'appropriate' gender relations. Her concern might be interpreted as a belief that highlighting issues of discrimination against women is the same as blaming the men. And holding men accountable for gender relations, challenging them, creates tension. In trying to make sense of Raelene's focus on males, we found Magda Lewis' work helpful. In commenting on why many women 'resist' confronting gender issues, Lewis (1993: 157) says:

> For women, tension in the feminist classroom is often organised around our historically produced nurturing capacity as a feature of our psychologically internalised role as caretakers.

Raelene may have constructed her understandings of 'feminine' around a focus on nurturing; she may also be resisting her mother's

conceptualisation of 'equal opportunity'. Nevertheless whilst Raelene expressed concern in a number of interviews over women taking on 'male roles' and appeared to us to be keen to 'protect' males from overwork or from blame, she still identifies a focus on changing masculine behaviours as a way in which teachers can address gender issues in the classroom. When asked about her plans to implement a gender inclusive curriculum, Raelene replies:

> I suppose I've talked about using texts that were inclusive, and like I call my kids 'children' all the time, and by having all kids cleaning up and, you know, cleaning their tables with Spray and Wipe and getting all kids to do the cleaning up after themselves, so the boys get used to doing that as well. Getting all kids to do different jobs, encouraging them to [voice] their feelings without being violent, encouraging them in any way they want to go. I think that's it. (Interview 95: 2)

Raelene's focus on ensuring that boys learn to clean up after themselves may be understood as a recognition that such domestic arrangements are still in need of negotiation and challenge; or perhaps Raelene sees gender relations in the domestic sphere as a domain that she can influence as a teacher. She does talk about her wish to 'get all kids to do different jobs' which could be heard as encouraging girls to take up a range of non-traditional positions but she doesn't specify this; indeed, such encouragement may be seen by Raelene as making things 'worse for men', a concern she frequently expresses, whereas, encouraging young boys to do their 'fair share' in domestic arrangements might improve life for girls as well, indirectly, without significantly altering the division between male roles in the public sphere, female roles in the private.

While both Marlene and Raelene entered the course as mature age students and both acknowledge their mothers' influence on their own beliefs, Raelene seems far more ambivalent about her mother's ideas of gender, ie., that women should be independent of men, that men should assume their responsibilities for childcare; she seems to take up what appears to be a less provocative construction of appropriate relationships. She appears to 'borrow' from a range of somewhat contradictory ideas, eg, women should not challenge men's place in the public domain but men should do their fair share at home. Her concern for the feelings of her male student colleagues is perhaps a measure of her own beliefs concerning femininity and nurturing.

Interestingly, when asked to comment on how the course contributed to her understandings about gender as an educational issue, Raelene said:

> I think it's been good, but it's been exhausting I think...I just think it could be a bit more--well, maybe having men come in and talk about gender, as well as just women because it's really one-sided.' (Interview 95: 2)

Unlike the two previous students, **Gail** entered the course as an eighteen year old. She completed her primary and secondary education at coeducational state schools. Her parents each completed 'some secondary education' and her mother worked as a dressmaker, her father as an accountant/clerk. In her secondary schooling, Gail participated in single sex classes, self defence classes for girls, discussions of sexual harassment and non-sexist language, so when she began the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course, she had some experience of the strategies in place for enhancing girls' educational opportunities. However, such affirmative action experiences did not seem to convince Gail of the value of feminism. In her first year, Gail defined feminism as: 'Believing women to be the best--more equal than a man'. (Survey 92: 3); her second year definition of 'feminism' was 'the belief that women have to be 'on top' and drive men into the ground.' (Survey 93: 1)

Gail, like Raelene, also expressed concern over how the course had what she believed was too much emphasis on gender, making the males feel uncomfortable. However she seemed to support this position by arguing that gender was irrelevant. When asked to comment on how gender informed her personal relationships, Gail in her final interview (1995) states:

> I guess, take a personal example, if my fiancee, told me to do the dishes, I'd tell him to go jump {laugh} but not because it's a female role, just because I don't want to do it. You know gender doesn't really come in to it for me any more. I'm obviously female so I suppose, as far as dressing goes and everything, I'm going to dress like a female. I'm not going to try and be a man, because I'm not, physically I'm not but mentally I'm just as capable as anyone else. Gender doesn't come into it. (Interview 95: 2)

Gail's denial of the significance of gender is a recurring theme through a number of different interviews. She has a firm belief that 'gender doesn't come into it' or, as she states later, 'I don't treat people differently'. Clark (1990) found in her research with primary teachers that 'I treat all people the same' is a commonly held belief which however, can cause teachers to miss how gender identities are constructed in ongoing ways through relationships and experiences.

For example in her first interview when commenting on how her background has influenced her ideas and understandings of gender, Gail says:

> In a lot of ways my own family and school and experience were very segregated, like 'boys do this and girls do that.' But my own family never stopped me from doing anything that I wanted to do because I was a girl. You had to be able to justify why you were doing it and if you wanted to do it, that was fine...They

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> didn't discourage me. I expressed an interest in dancing so they said, 'go for it.' (Interview 92: 1)

Gail seemed to take for granted the need to 'justify' particular activities; yet if all activities were equally open to everyone, to 'people' regardless of sex, why would they need to be 'justified'? She also doesn't reflect on why dancing might be perceived as acceptable for a girl. That she feels able to challenge the boundaries of 'acceptable' gender behaviours may mean that she had not yet encountered such boundaries, or unstated restrictions; alternatively perhaps, she has deeply internalised those boundaries without asking why. For Gail, then, gender relations are invisible because they simply 'are'.

We thought that for Gail a turning point in her awareness of gender as an educational issue came in her second year of teaching practice. When asked to comment on the first year lecture which focussed on gender, Gail says,

> I thought it was a bit of a groan because, myself personally, I don't treat people differently. Until I got on [teaching] rounds this year, I didn't realise that I did treat people differently. So last year it was like, 'What is the problem?' ...To me there is no problem. They are just people and you have to consider things but--[...] The school that I was at last year was very similar to my own experiences of schools...the boys did tunnelball and the girls did crossball and that was all there was to it. And at the time I felt comfortable in that because it was my experience of school as well. But when I got to the school this year and I saw boys playing netball and girls playing football, I just stopped myself in time from saying, 'what!!' It just brought it to my attention...I got really mad at myself for thinking--all this time I had been saying that there was not a problem, but because I had never confronted it before, it was a problem. (Interview 93: 3)

The experience of seeing boys and girls playing 'non-traditional' sports appears to have enabled Gail to come to some understanding of the 'taken-for-granted' assumptions she previously made concerning gender. For her, seeing a school-based program where gender 'appropriate' behaviours were challenged in a practical manner provided insight into not so much 'the problem' but the possibilities for change. Because this challenged her own unexamined beliefs, Gail was then prepared to admit that there might be something to learn.

In the interview the following year, (1994), Gail again referenced this experience, saying,

> I was lucky enough to have rounds in [names school] where there was no problem at all with gender...Yeah, they had a really strong equal opportunity thing going in the school, so it was

> good to see it in operation. And there was really no problem with ability or gender or anything...it was just all across the board, if you could do it, you just did it. And the teacher involved everybody, because they were that person, not because they were boys or girls. So the girls were often called out to lift heavy things just as much as the boys were. (Interview 94:1)

Reflecting on this experience, Gail appears to both endorse the need for equal opportunity programs and resist acknowledging that gender was an issue, returning again to her arguments that the program worked because the children were treated as people rather than as boys or girls. This highlights an ongoing dilemma: how to explore gender as an educational issue, emphasise 'inclusive strategies', enable students to see how gender relations are constructed in an ongoing way through schooling practices, without endorsing 'gendered difference', re-creating the categories of female and male as a fundamental principle. This is our dilemma. It was not Gail's. For her the difficulty lay in giving 'too much' attention to girls.

In the same interview, Gail said:

> If you make it too much of a big deal, like, 'oh girls this and girls that,' then the girls become the focus and the boys miss out. I don't consider myself a feminist but I do consider myself assertive and that is what I try to promote with the kids...to get them motivated and feel good about themselves and achieve something while I am there...but I don't go to the extreme of having just always girls contributing. (Interview 94: 7)

Gail positions herself as individually powerful; subjectively she feels good about herself and able to express her own needs. She sees this as a skill which she aims to instil in her students. Her commitment to helping students be 'assertive' as well as her determination to treat children as 'people', not as boys or girls, is again taken up in her final interview when she discussed how she would address gender issues in her teaching. She said:

> Judge kids by their merits, and not their gender. Just let them have a go at anything they want to; they should take risks, because that's the whole problem, that they don't feel safe to take risks.[...] If they're scared to take a risk, it shouldn't be because the boys are tough or the girls are sensitive or whatever. It should be because they're human beings, not because they're boys or girls. (Interview 95: 3)

On one level the emphasis on individual 'merits' and individual choice to do 'anything that they want to' might be heard as Gail endorsing a liberal feminist position. There aren't--or shouldn't be--any gendered limitations placed on behaviours or activities. However, this emphasis

on individual merits and free choice is critiqued by Clark (1990:16). Discussing her research, she says:

> Underpinning the practice [of free choice] is the belief that children are unique individuals with different interests, different stages of development and different learning styles and that children can choose wisely the how, the when and to some degree the what of their learning. What can happen, however, is that when explicit constraints are removed, implicit constraints, in particular those related to ideas about appropriate masculinity and femininity and constraints related to power differences, become more influential. This is especially the case when the implicit constraints are consistent with our deeply held views about gender. The teacher, because of the power of the idea of free choice, evades her/his obligation to make explicit constraints on moral or educational grounds.

Ironically, while Gail cited her teaching rounds as an experience that enabled her to 'see the problem', she didn't perceive the school's emphasis on 'equal opportunity' as a means by which teachers challenged explicitly the taken-for-granted **constraints** of gender. She returns to the idea of 'free choice' as a solution; the course has not elaborated on, nor enabled her to question, how genuinely *unfree* such choices are for many children.

In her final interview, when asked about how the course helped her understandings, Gail said:

> I feel that at times it's been better, then it's all over the place. It's one thing to say boys and girls are equal, basically treat them the same, let them have a go if they want to, but it's not okay, to present all the feminist views because the males feel a bit nervous with that. They're okay with it, and they can relate to it, but, it's putting them out, so, I don't think it's right... Present the facts, but leave the choice up to us. You can get just as many horrible females as you can males... as far as the teaching goes, it was okay at most times. First year, it was really, we were surprised to hear the lecturers talking about gender equity because I didn't really know what it meant (laugh) but now I do. It's been good. (Interview 95: 2)

Gail like Raelene, seems to construct her own understandings of appropriate femininity as 'caring for the emotional well-being of males'. Gail also locates herself within another discourse which might be summarised as 'blame the victim'. Her argument that 'you can get just as many horrible females as you can males' is based on the premise that somehow, 'horrible female' is the equivalent of 'horrible male'--and therefore one cancels the other out. Males therefore can't be held responsible without holding females responsible too.

This is a recognisable, if somewhat circular argument: 'we really are the 'same', are 'equal', see? We're even equal in horribleness.' A review of crime statistics, road deaths, domestic violence and sexual abuse statistics however quickly negates this argument. However, clearly, the course did not enable Gail to explore the ways in which differential power and gender relations intersect.

Again, like Raelene, Gail expresses her concern regarding the well-being of the few males within the course. As with Raelene, we heard this as a need to 'protect' the males--due perhaps to Gail's own constructions of 'feminine'. At the same time, she says she encourages all children, presumably including girls, to take risks, to make choices. Why then does she feel the need to express concern for the males in the course--aren't they 'taking risks', haven't they made choices about what they want to do, and therefore, why does Gail think they need to be especially catered for? These were questions that we puzzled over often.

Naomi attended coeducational state schools for her primary and secondary schooling. Naomi has three sisters and one brother and both parents work in professional positions. She also was eighteen when she began the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course. Additionally, in terms of her own schooling, Naomi also participated in a range of affirmative action programs for girls including single-sex classes and camps, Career Nights for girls, visits by women speakers on non-traditional careers, discussions of sexual harassment issues and the 'Maths Multiplies Your Chances' campaign to encourage young women to study maths and sciences.

Commenting on her understandings concerning gender relations in her personal life, Naomi in her fourth year interview discusses gender dynamics at her part time place of work. Naomi says:

> I work at a sports store (part time) and the manager there has a view that females are on the registers and the males are in the [exercise] department helping with all the power striders and you know, the running machines and all that sort of thing. I found that in the way I act toward him, I have to very careful in what I say, I mean, often I have to be very careful in what I say. Often I have to sort of joke with him and laugh with him just to sort of get a point across, that I can see that he's got very, I suppose, set ways in how he treats females and males.
>
> Yeah, he'd get very offended, I'd say. You're sort of challenging his power in a way... I mean I can be assertive with him, but jokingly... if I tried to become more powerful than him, then he would take great offence to it. But I mean I can be assertive as well, but yeah I've just got to pick the right times to be assertive, I suppose...(Interview 95: 4)

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In this we see Naomi as able to recognise and reflect upon her experiences as a young woman on the ways in which gender and power relations intersect in a work situation. She is not a 'victim' in this, but appears to understand how to make the situation work for her; while her recognition that she must 'pick the right times to be assertive' might be heard as Naomi 'pandering' to the power of the male boss, she seems to explain this as a way to not only keep him friendly but also to express her point of view occasionally.

Naomi positions herself as aware of the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships with males, particularly in a hierarchical workplace situation of boss and employee. She seems to accept somewhat unquestioningly that for females, the skills of joking and being pleasant to males, are crucial and expected. Perhaps Naomi sees looking after the emotional well being of males as a necessary (financial) survival strategy. Again in trying to understand Naomi's construction of gender relations, we found Magda Lewis' (1993: 161) comments helpful. She says:

> ...within the terms of patriarchy, women have had no choice but to care about the feelings of men. Women know that, historically, not caring has cost us our lives: intellectually, emotionally, socially, psychologically, and physically.

Naomi's discussion of how gender relationships impact on her own work situation in a sport store, are not unique; in some ways, they also are to be found within educational settings as well and her 'knowledge' of how such relations operate and are constructed might be of benefit to her in her 'survival' as a teacher. For example, Coulter, (1995: 37) finds similar situations described in her study of first year teachers. She points out that 'women teachers are expected to show the appropriate deference to male authority and conduct themselves in ways which please men.'

Interestingly, in her first interview, commenting on her parents' values, Naomi says, 'I was brought up in a family that took note of [gender] and mainly my parents emphasised gender and discrimination and racism and all that sort of thing throughout my life...and when I got to school I was able to understand more about it...They [her parents] saw a female as being equal within the workforce, and both males and females were capable of doing the same sort of academic things...My parents treated us all differently, because we are all different people but generally there hasn't been any special treatment according to sex.' (Interview 93: 1)

Perhaps because of her parents' stated beliefs that females would be treated equally in the workforce, when she experienced very different expectations of her behaviour, Naomi was able to reflect and comment on how gender and power relationships are constructed in the workplace. Her discussion concerning how she is able to assert her point of view, provided she jokes with her boss, seems to us an interesting example of the ways in which

women make sense of contradictions between deeply held beliefs and actual experiences as regards gender relations

Of her second year teaching experience, Naomi commented:

> There was actually one incident when I was in the art room with all the children and the principal walked in and said, "I want one strong boy to lift this chair." That brought me back to my own primary schooling...I thought they had maybe passed that since a lot of the gender issues have been brought up over the years, so yeah, that really surprised me. They were ten year old kids, so physically they were all capable of lifting a chair. [...] Within the classroom, the teacher that I spent time with--if boys acted up, she would react more aggressively, whereas if girls acted up she would be more sensitive and not so--demanding. (Interview 93: 4)

Perhaps Naomi's 'hope' that the focus on gender issues in primary schools over a number of years would have eradicated the sexist practice she witnessed is a measure of her optimism and belief in the power of educational change. Such practices continue to construct gender relations as unequal and based on difference; Naomi's observations suggest that she is aware of and concerned about such sexist practices. She is also able to comment on how she would seek to implement a gender inclusive curriculum as a teacher. In her final interview, Naomi said:

> I'd probably promote again, a cooperative sort of atmosphere where the kids are encouraged to cooperate with others on computers, when you're doing mathematics, English, when out on the sporting field--that sort of thing. But I mean it's hard not to go around going 'you boys let the girls have a go', sort of thing... I suppose in everyday teaching I'd make sure that I do have in my mind, that I need to include both males and females... include every child, and try to get through to every child regardless of being male and or female, yeah. (Interview 95: 9)

Establishing a learning environment where relationships are based on equality and reciprocity, ('cooperative learning') was certainly an example used within the course in discussing how a gender 'inclusive' curriculum might be implemented. That Naomi cites this as a useful strategy suggests that perhaps for Naomi this may be one way of providing a challenge to the sort of power and gender relationships she experienced at work. Perhaps for Naomi cooperative learning is an attractive pedagogy because it may enable children (and adults) to challenge more traditional, hierarchical power arrangements.

However, Naomi's comments regarding 'you boys, let the girls have a go' might be heard as still needing to seek permission from males on behalf of

the 'weaker' female students. Underlying this is the taken for granted assumption that a) the males 'rightfully' control the space; b) their permission must be sought; and c) girls cannot achieve 'a fair go' without the adult teacher's intervention. While Naomi acknowledges the importance of addressing gender issues in education, we might understand her comments as reflecting her uncertainty of how women/girls might position themselves as able to exercise power.

Her comment 'regardless of being male or female', like Gail's appears to miss the ways in which children's understandings of what it means to 'be male or female' are actively constructed in and through teaching practices. Yet her own observations of such practices suggest a certain level of insight.

Alex, the only male in this group of eight, attended an all-boys independent school for both his primary and secondary schooling and was eighteen when he began the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course. Both parents work in professional occupations and Alex has one younger brother whom he references as influential in his decision to become a primary teacher.

Like Naomi and Gail, during his secondary schooling, Alex participated in a number of gender awareness activities including discussions on sexual harassment, and the reasons for, and use of non-sexist language. However, in Alex's case, these were within an all male discussion group. The emphasis he places on the importance of communication with his female peers appears to have been influenced by his single-sex schooling experiences.

In his fourth year interview, Alex, when asked how gender impacts on his personal relationships says:

> Well, in terms of being here, [the only male in his tutorial class], it's pretty important because when I do work in a group situation, I generally have to rely on working with females, and that's where the communication aspect comes into it. It's a lot different, I think, talking to people on a professional level than it is when you're socialising.... Like, if you're out with your mates or your friends, you generally have no trouble communicating but, when you're working here, it's very important. I have to know that I'm working in an environment where I'm in a minority, so, it's pretty important for me to make sure that I can keep up communicating, the communication skills that I've learnt the previous years. (Interview 95: 1)

Alex, sees communication with females as a major issue for himself and he sees a clear distinction between gender interactions in a social context to gender interactions in professional situations. We found it interesting that Alex does not see himself as having difficulties communicating

within a social situation, but feels the need to continually practice his communication skills with his female student colleagues on a 'professional level'. This seems to offer a challenge to the idea that in the public sphere, males may present more confidently than do females.

He certainly sees himself as part of a 'minority' of men in the field of primary teacher education, (an accurate perception in terms of number of students but not in terms of staff since even within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course, the vast majority of academic staff and senior administrators are male. Yet Alex does not identify with these males.)

Being in a minority influences how Alex perceives his relationships and the need for 'communication'. What precisely he means by this term remains unclear to us. Is it ensuring that his voice is heard? Is it ensuring that he actively listens to others? How does this emphasis on 'communication' inform the ways in which Alex constructs his own understandings of masculinity? Of teaching? How does his emphasis on 'communication' intersect with students such as Raelene and Gail who appear to show great concern and support for their male peers?

In the light of Raelene's concern about 'feeling bad for those guys' and Gail's opinion that 'all the feminist views' presented within the course made the males 'feel a bit nervous' and was 'putting them out', it is interesting to note that Alex himself does not reject gender relations as an educational issue. In fact, Alex was keenly interested in issues of gender, choosing this topic for his independent (contract) study during his third year (1994) of the course. During that year, Alex wrote in his journal:

> I have noticed on teaching rounds that many teachers are much more aware of gender and are trying to keep a good balance between boys and girls participation levels in sport, discussions and activities. I don't think it is a case of just including a certain group, sex or person in something to alleviate this problem, it is making sure that the children are aware that they are all equal in the classroom and that there is no difference in standing simply because they are male or female. I certainly feel that it is the job of the teacher to make sure that his or her pupils' learning is not being disadvantaged or hindered in any way because of gender based discrimination or problems. Children need to be shown that they are all equal in stature and that no one child is better because they are male or female.' (School Studies C1 Journal, 1994:1)

Like Gail, Alex's awareness of gender issues was enhanced by his work in schools and by his reflections on those experiences. He expresses strongly his idea that an integral part of teacher's work is to counter sexism. In terms of Alex's own schooling, this is interesting because, as he said at his first year interview:

> I've never really interacted a lot with females because I've been sent through all male schools. I had girlfriends, but was never really in large groups of females until I was 17. I was a bit nervous at first but I found that I could handle it. [...] Coming out of an all male school, I sometimes found it difficult to talk to females.' (Interview 92: 2, 4)

Within the family context Alex makes mention of his younger brother and the pleasure he experienced helping his brother with his school work and sporting interests. He says:

> I have a younger brother and I like kicking the football with him and helping him with his homework, with his friends, organising his parties. I used to walk him to school, take him home from school. I found I enjoyed working with younger children--more than Year Seven and upwards--because they're easier to deal with. (Interview 92: 2)

This experience with a younger sibling perhaps influenced his interest in primary teaching. His comment about power and control seems to indicate that Alex would find working with older students a more difficult challenge, both in terms of control and communication.

In the same interview, Alex again references the importance of 'communication'. He said:

> I think I find it easier to communicate with kids because I've got a younger brother...I'm not scared to talk to them. I think older males, 15 to 25 year olds, they can't sort of talk to them...I think it's all down to communication. Maybe it's not so much that they can't talk to them, but they can't communicate on the level that the kids would like them to. (Inter 92: 2)

It is interesting to speculate on what it is that Alex means when he says that male adolescents and young male adults, 'can't communicate on the level that the kids would like them to'. Understandings of gender relations which are based on binary oppositions have linked male/masculinity with the 'rational, objective, independent' and placed these attributes as in opposition to the supposed female/feminine qualities of 'emotive, subjective, dependent'. Perhaps Alex draws on these binary oppositions in his unquestioning assumptions that young male adults can't communicate. We hear this as endorsing the belief that males are unable to talk about feelings, emotions, deeply held values. Yet Alex himself contradicts this assumption in his determination to establish and maintain sound communication with his peer group, and with his students. How can the teacher education course challenge this unstated belief about masculinity as inability to communicate? What further communication skills and practices need to be explored?

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Commenting on how, as a teacher he would implement a gender inclusive curriculum, Alex says:

> Obviously it'd have to relate to the material that you use, the way you teach it, the language that you use. I think that implementing a gender inclusive curriculum means that you are covering things that everyone can feel a part of, and everyone can be involved [in]. I sometimes compare it, loosely, to cultural issues. Multiculturalism is a similar thing in that you have to try and implement [it] in the classroom, [...] you have to make sure everyone is [...] a part of it, and you can do that subtly I think, and I think implementing a gender inclusive curriculum would be done in a similar way. You just make sure that everyone feels a part of what you're doing. Obviously, you could do cooking as a thing, and you're going to have the boys saying, 'well you know, we don't really do it, it's a girls' thing', but you could try and make them feel a part of it...(Interview 95: 4)

From these comments it appears that Alex thinks the 'subtle' approach is appropriate and that expecting that 'everyone feels a part of it' is important. How much, we wonder, did our teacher education course make Alex feel 'apart' or a part of it?'

Raelene, Gail and Alex all place value on addressing the needs of boys as well as girls in their strategies for a gender inclusive curriculum. However, perhaps what is lacking from all three students analyses is the question of how power relationships intersect with constructions of gender. Without acknowledging the ways in which 'masculinity' is often constructed as that which is 'not feminine', (Clark, 1990), Alex's desire to involve all children but particularly boys in non-traditional activities will not sufficiently challenge the boys understandings of appropriate behaviours. As long as cooking is viewed by the boys as 'a girl's thing', being required to do cooking will not in itself challenge the binary opposition nor will it give value to traditional 'feminine' knowledge and experiences. Additionally, unless the ways in which power, status and prestige associated with hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995), are considered, the move away from gender as a significant category of analysis 'neutralises' the curriculum once again and does not present a way to assist students to explore their taken-for-granted assumptions about appropriate behaviours.. 'Human beings', Gail's preferred terminology, then become once again aligned with the masculine. 'Feminine' becomes 'the other', rather than the valued and prestigious, powerful and respected.

Commenting on how the teacher education course has enhanced his understandings regarding gender, Alex says:

> I think it's been pretty well covered actually. We've looked at it the whole way through, maybe not as much as it should be. I mean, in this course itself, I've found that, as the males are a minority that, maybe a lot of the time, oh it's hard to say this, but I suppose I'd better, maybe females, the female majority, is not favoured but, seems to have more of a say...I'm not whingeing, I don't know how I mean that, I don't mean it really negatively. I mean obviously where there's a majority of someone, or something, there's going to be a, not favouring, but--- I don't know, sometimes you feel a bit left out... I mean, in most of my classes that I have now, I'm the only male in there, and you tend to feel a bit, isolated unless you know who you're sitting next to.
>
> But the course itself has covered it well. We looked at it in third year and second year, and the changes, just subtle changes in the way that teachers are now teaching, in the classroom and the language that they use, and the materials they cover...(Interview 95: 3)

The experience of being one of the few males in the course has given Alex a feel for the experience of being a member of a 'minority' group. He talks in terms of numbers and 'the women having more of a say'. Is he really surprised that given the lack of males in the course he does feel 'a bit left out'? That the women do take up more talk time? Why does he feel 'obliged' ['oh I suppose I'd better'] to convey his concerns? He stumbles over the issue of women being 'favoured', perhaps recognising that it would be hard to justify this complaint given the proportion of women to men. Perhaps, the 'naturalness' with which many males unquestioningly assume a 'right' to the majority of time and attention, may mean that for Alex, the lack of such attention is felt deeply. It may be so 'taken-for-granted' that he himself doesn't realise why he feels 'left out'. He does not reflect on how his experience of being in a minority, or feeling isolated might link to gender relationships in the classroom, or to how women in non-traditional occupations and positions of responsibility might experience a similar sense of alienation. Ironically, it could be argued that Alex has connected with his personal feelings but has yet to make the connection to the political/structural ways in which gender remains a category of difference.

Jennifer entered the course as an 18 year old as well. She went to a coeducational Catholic primary school. In her secondary schooling, at a Catholic school, she stated that she 'had mostly male teachers.'

Commenting on how she made sense of gender in personal relationships, in her final year interview, she said:

> Most of my best friends are males, and I get along I think better with males than I do with females so it's not really an issue. I

> don't have any dominant person in my life being a male or anything. It's not really an issue that I think about. (Interview 95: 1)

On the basis of her friendships, Jennifer sees little value in focusing on gender relations as problematic. She hasn't or says she hasn't experienced disadvantage/discrimination or unfair treatment because of her sex. Her understandings of 'feminine' do not appear to create conflict or disruption in her personal life. She sees no need to change although she did state in her third year that she sees the issue of gender as 'fairly important'. She also stated that she believed that 'it is a natural thing for boys to 'annoy' girls.' (Survey 94: 3)

Jennifer missed [or skipped] the lecture on gender inclusive curriculum given during her third year and reported that in her school experience in that year she had observed nothing that challenged her views on gender. 'I couldn't see any sort of hassle between the genders.... they all worked together.' (Interview 94: 1) Later however, she did say that she had noticed that 'Basically the boys take over the basketball court or the footy oval.' Whilst Jennifer, with prompting, noted one example of how gender relations were constructed through schooling practices, this appeared not to be a concern for her.

Her lack of concern and refusal to see gender as an issue and her acknowledged lack of communication with other women makes an interesting contrast with Alex's reflective analysis of his need to work on his communication skills and his professional relationships.
That Jennifer doesn't see 'any sort of **hassle** between the genders' suggests that her way of understanding gender is as conflict, a problem between boys and girls rather than gender as an ongoing set of negotiated relationships. Alex, perhaps sees gender relations as problematic, acknowledging the importance of addressing gender relations in his personal as well as professional life. Unlike Jennifer, Alex sees the classroom and curriculum as a possible site for changing gender relations, through offering new skills, and challenging taken-for-granted beliefs about 'appropriate' gender behaviours.

In her final year interview, asked how she would implement a gender inclusive curriculum, Jennifer says:

> Have a look at all the activities that we might be dealing with and make sure that they all benefit both boys and girls equally. That is all going to come through teaching experience, I don't think that there's much that I can sort of read up on. I mean, I'm sure there is, but I'm not concerned with it, so I think it will all just happen when I begin teaching properly. (Interview 95: 2)

Hoping it will all just happen when she begins 'teaching properly' ignores the importance of reflection as part of the teaching/learning process

(Britzman, 1994). There is little from her interviews to indicate that her understandings have changed or that she has benefited at all from the way gender issues have been dealt with throughout the course. What can we learn from Jennifer's comments? What more could we, or she have done? How do we 'hear' her indifference?

In her comments about how the teacher education course has enhanced her understandings regarding gender Jennifer responded:

> Gender in our university course has just been sort of drummed into us, I guess, and so much so that every time we hear the word, it's, you know, 'Oh God here comes this issue again'. At the same time I don't think I have learnt that much about it through university, only through my own observations. (Interview 95: 2)

Her rather scathing comments here indicate a strong resistance to exploring the issues of gender and education and her comments were the most negative of the eight students in this part of the study. 'Oh God, here comes this issue again,' we heard as a refusal to consider the importance of gender within an educational program, a passive view of the education process and a lack of interest in her own further education in related areas.

Yet, Jennifer volunteered to be a part of this project, and to share her experiences and ideas with us concerning how gender issues were presented. That she found no use for them, and wants to tell us this, becomes for us quite an interesting dilemma. She is outspoken and forceful in her opinions, able to present her point of view. She does also see herself as talking on behalf of other students by her use of the word 'we'. She certainly does not feel in any way obliged to tell us what she thinks we might want to hear. Yet, she does want to be heard. She could easily have skipped classes, ignored tutorials, refused the readings, excluded herself from discussions about gender with the same outcomes. That she wants to tell us how 'wrong' this emphasis on gender relations is appears to us bewildering. What is it about how she understands gender that we have failed to hear?

Leah was in her early 40's when she began the teacher education course. She had attended co-educational schools for both her primary and secondary education. Both her mother and her father were educated to primary school level. Leah had had previous full-time work in a state police department and had also worked as a courier and clothing fitter. She, like her parents, was Australian born. Her mother worked as a home maker and milk bar proprietor and her father worked as a cleaner in a factory and a hairdresser.

In her fourth year interview discussing how gender affects her personal life, Leah said:

> Issues of gender in my personal life are important. I wouldn't marry a man who expects me to do all the house work [laughs]. There has to be equity and sharing in the maintenance of the home and all those sort of things. That doesn't mean to say, though that I might not come to an agreement whereby I agree to iron my husband's shirt if he agreed to wash my car. It's a sharing of tasks that you might find is a better split... I believe there needs to be more sharing particularly in personal life. If there were children, then I'd expect the husband to put as much time into the raising of the children as I would, and not argue, because of his professional life, that he had less time than I did, particularly if I had a professional life at the same time. It would be different if I was at home, but I couldn't imagine that that would be so...(Interview 1995: 3)

Leah has a strong commitment to gender equality in the home and family situation. She makes it clear that she is open to negotiation and compromise but could not really imagine being home as a wife and mother without a career. She said she was 'from pre-liberation times when 'girls were girls and boys were boys'.' (Survey 1992: 4) although this does not seem to have been the expectation in her own family situation.

In her second year interview, Leah commented on how her own home background influenced her ideas and understandings of gender:

> Mum and Dad never had expectations that I would grow up and just get married or that education was a waste of time. There was never any pressure put on me as regards family conditions and I could do whatever I wanted in my life and they respect that. I wished they'd pushed me a bit more in the education sense, because I won a scholarship and never took that up. (Interview 93: 1)

Although her parents encouraged her to do whatever she wanted apparently 'regardless' of the fact that she was a woman, at the same time they did not encourage her to continue in her education even though she had won a scholarship. Perhaps, unexamined in this story, is the underlying belief of her parents that for women of her generation, education was a waste. While this contradicts Leah's recollection of her parents support for her, that they didn't 'push' her into taking up the scholarship is remembered with some regret.

Leah had experienced sexual discrimination in her previous public service career as a police officer. When describing it during her second year interview she said that a senior officer saw her as 'the exotic hot house flower, not deemed to be fit to be a detective. It made me feel really bad.' Leah is able to recall her experience of being devalued because she was a woman. These experiences have shaped Leah's understandings

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concerning 'appropriate' gender behaviours. In many ways, these experiences have enabled Leah to reject the more traditional construction of 'feminine' and to renegotiate her own positionality in light of what she 'knows.' Leah describes herself as having changed a lot from when she was a child; she says she has 'grown from a small brown mouse to a very vocal bitch.' (Interview 93: 5).

When asked to comment on how she would implement a gender inclusive curriculum, Leah says:

> Well, considering that little boys are frightened by literacy, and little girls are perhaps frightened about maths, I'd try and give them empowerment to make these subjects accessible. That could be through analysing my teaching methods, and deciding whether it would be better to use more concrete forms of learning... So I would try and adapt my classroom accordingly. I think, if you can, instil in ... if you can find a hook into children, and get the boys loving literacy - even if they have a daily diary, or a weekly diary, where you can encourage them to develop writing habits, and that would go through from the different grades. Because if you can encourage those good habits, [get the] reflective thought process happening, then they'll take that through to adult life and be able to communicate better. If we can teach boys to communicate with words, rather than their fists, then it will be an enormous achievement. (Interview 95: 6)

Leah clearly thinks that boys' literacy skills and communication are crucial aspects of addressing gender in and through the curriculum. Like Alex, she emphasises the importance for boys to develop clear communication skills to enhance all aspects of their lives. Perhaps, like Alex, she enters into the discourse concerning masculinity as unable to discuss feelings. However, this focus on boys and literacy, in part, also picks up on current media debates regarding the boys doing 'less well' than girls in the literacy area. While such coverage of the issues received widespread media attention, the more subtle forms of analysis concerning this, were generally missed in the public forum. Certainly, a number of feminists did challenge such a simplistic 'reading' of the issues. (eg., Gilbert, 1995, Tease and Davies, 1995). Although lacking insight into alternative interpretations, Leah is clearly committed to change and prepared to address boys' perceived needs as well as girls.

She said about the education of girls:

> To make maths exciting for girls, there are other ways of teaching it--like you can use constructions or models, [...] so it's opening up the professions. I'd like to see that the children come out of my grade, thinking that they can do any job that they want to , whether it's girls wanting to be plumbers or

> painters, or architects, or engineers, or whether it's men wanting to be nurses and teachers. (Interview 95: 6)

Her focus for curriculum change is on challenging traditional, limited job options; she sees the need to provide wide and unrestricted occupational choice for both girls and boys and indicates that this needs to be part of children's early and ongoing education.

Leah, like Gail focuses on the need to assist boys and girls to move beyond traditional constructions of gender. She perceives this inability to move across a range of skills as due to 'fear' rather than a resistance to change, and/or the children's own constructions of 'appropriate' masculine and feminine behaviours. Unlike Raelene, she sees it as important to encourage girls and boys to consider a range of occupations, and does not fear that this will force men to 'lose out.'

In relation to her comments about how the teacher education course has enhanced her understandings about gender she says:

> Well, I've been happy with the amount we've had on gender education, but the younger peer group of students have been saying, if they hear one more thing about gender, they'll throw up. I think they're under the illusion that they live in a society that is very equal, with the relationships with males and females, and unfortunately this is not so. I still think it needs to be addressed. I think the, last subject that we did in Education [D], an examination of gender and stereotyping, I thought that was really a quite good example. (Interview 95: 3)

Leah cites her own life experiences as justification for her critique of those who 'resist' taking up gender issues in education. Her previous work and background experiences have shown her a different reality. She, in contrast to Jennifer, for example, finds that there is much for her to learn before she actually goes teaching.

Christine began the teacher education course as an eighteen year old. She had been educated at coeducational state schools for both her primary and secondary schooling. Christine's part-time work was as a sales assistant selling cosmetics. Like both her parents, Christine was born in Australia. Her mother had completed some secondary education and her father had completed both a trade/certificate course and a bachelors degree. Her mother worked as a home maker and her father was employed as a chef, although it is clear from her interview comments that Christine and her mother did not live with her father.

In her final interview (1995), Christine commented on how gender influenced her personal life, She said:

> I only did electives this year, I was having a baby. Since then my whole world's caved in as the family's sort of showed just how sexist they are.
>
> I was really horrified, and I'm saying 'Oh but it doesn't matter you know, it [the baby] can have this and it can have that', and everyone's sort of got their own ideas on what this baby's going to have, play with, wear, do, say, believe. [...]
>
> At the moment I'm finding it really difficult, because I physically can't do what I used to be able to do, so I feel really dependent on my partner, and that hurts [laughs], I'm starting to sort of feel more vulnerable because I'm female and things like that but that's just my condition, and then I can't help that. (Interview 95: 1 & 4)

It is interesting that Christine uses the word "it" in some parts of the interview when she refers to her baby. The interview took place before the baby was born, and clearly, Christine was not aware of the sex of her child. It is clear from her comments that becoming a mother has been a painful learning experience for her and she has been dismayed by her family's reactions and the sorts of expectations that have been expressed as appropriate ways of nurturing the child.

The social constructions of gender, experienced by Christine via the many comments about how her child will 'have, play, wear, do, say, believe' appear to be for Christine challengeable or at least she seems to feel able to resist. However, the physical reality of her pregnancy sounds as if it is more unsettling for her. Perhaps, through her pregnancy, Christine has been made more aware of her femaleness. The experience of pregnancy for Christine seems to force her to acknowledge biological difference--perhaps in contradiction to her commitment to feminism and change. That Christine describes herself as feeling 'dependent' and 'vulnerable' and finds these distressing suggests that for her these experiences challenge her own sense of who she is, and how she controls her life. . Additionally, when she does challenge others' gendered expectations, this too can be painful, as Christine's comments convey.

> I battle with friends [laughs] especially like with their children, that they'll only buy their little boys certain things or, 'oh isn't this a nice outfit, oh if only you were having this', things like that. It bothers me. I think the reason why it's sort of such a part of my life is because I'm in conflict with everybody. I find people's attitudes really stifling. (Interview 95: 5)

While she appears to find the physical and biological responses to pregnancy as difficult, making her feel in less control, her friends' comments based on gendered stereotypes, which she describes as 'stifling', serve to clarify her own beliefs concerning gender. Perhaps, for Christine

being in 'conflict with everybody' provides her with a sense that she can resist such constructions. Christine works to challenge the collective discourses concerning what is/is not acceptable for this child.

In her first year interview, she talked about her childhood. She said:

> I had a single mother bring me up..... Because we didn't have a dad, we had a lot more of those masculine kinds of things to do... We had to put out the rubbish and help with gardening... that other kids would have their dads do. We were lucky like that... We've [my brother and I] had a lot of responsibility since we were seven or eight. (Interview 92: 5)

Christine perceives it as 'lucky' that she learnt independence and was able to do many things because she did not have a father at home. This absence required learning a wider range of behaviours; Christine and her brother were expected to do things that she describes as 'masculine'. Like Leah, Christine has had experiences which challenge the taken for granted assumptions behind 'male role' and 'female role'; Her lived experiences have enabled her to distinguish between arbitrary limitations based on collective constructions of 'appropriate' gender behaviours, and the possibilities for challenging, resisting and/or constructing alternative positions.

Christine, like Marlene and Raelene cites her mother as being influential in her understandings of gender as a socially constructed category. In her second year interview, she said:

> Even with Mum I saw that women can be in control, can be dominant and assertive and these were all the things that we were brought up to be, without it being stated that it was because we were female. She'd say, 'Just because you are female doesn't mean you can't do that. [Interview 93: 6]

This is a constant theme throughout her responses, both when she reflected on her own mother's experiences and as she sorted through her own feelings, ideas and experiences of being pregnant. For Christine, believing that she can do anything, discovering herself as 'vulnerable' and 'dependent' must have been particularly distressing. In the same interview, she also told us about her grandmother and the type of advice she received from her:

> My nan was a bit of a feminist... very anti-male, because her first husband was an absolute chauvinist pig. She wants [us].... to be very cautious. (Interview 1993: 6)

Whilst Christine, like Gail equates feminism with 'anti-male' she justifies her grandmother's position because of her negative experiences. She

doesn't appear to hold this against her nan, nor does she see this as totally negative.

In her final interview, Christine discussed how she would address gender issues within the classroom. She said:

> I'd first get in there and work out what was happening, what do the kids believe, what were they used to, and that would be sort of where I'd start to change things for them. I'd talk about it with the kids, saying 'I've noticed this, I've noticed that' just as I would if I noticed if a particular child wasn't sort of being treated equally.
>
> Well , what do I want the kids to learn? Okay, is this appropriate for boys and girls? Often when I sort of do anything, I always sort of think now, 'What are the boys going to say about this and what are the girls going to say about that sort of thing?' It's very hard to get a topic that'll interest them both, and then what is the understanding that I want them to develop through learning about this topic, so that it's interesting to both [groups]. That's the tricky part and trying to think what sort of comments or negative reactions might occur, so that I'm ready for them before they happen.
>
> Looking at the resources available, [...] and that's something you've got to work the kids through, so if you've got resources that aren't very inclusive, whether it's gender inclusive or otherwise, like draw that to the kids' attention, get them to comment on it, and get them to act on it.
>
> I do a lot of monitoring in my teaching, what sort of learning styles suit the girls, what suits the boys and how can I make sure that everyone is catered for? But as far as answering the question properly I'm just really not sure [laughs]. (Interview 95: 6

Christine's concern to start from where her students 'are at' we hear as a way of acknowledging children's own values and beliefs concerning gender which they bring to the classroom and renegotiate in an ongoing way. She appears to understand the ways in which students are actively engaged in resisting, challenging, endorsing or accepting a range of positions. Her engagement with the children, the importance she places on talking through ideas concerning gender with them, her awareness of the ways in which materials and resources work to construct 'appropriate' gender behaviours all suggest that Christine sees gender relations as a dynamic process rather than as either 'a hassle' or as binary 'roles'.

Christine is very aware of the complexities of gender as an educational issue in relation to classroom management, curriculum planning, and

teaching practices. In contrast to Jennifer, she is thinking about the processes and pedagogical issues in detail and not expecting it all just to happen when she takes up a teaching position. Thinking and planning for ways to enhance her teaching approaches, constructing challenging strategies for both girls and boys within the classroom, thinking through the potential problems and reactions of her pupils indicate to us that Christine has taken up many of the ideas and strategies around gender inclusive curriculum practices as presented in the teacher education course.

Again like Marlene, having a feminist nan and mother may be a significant factor in Christine's willingness to take up many of the issues presented and discussed. Again, perhaps because of her 'like-mindedness' to our own beliefs and values concerning the importance of gender in education, we found Christine's comments both insightful and satisfying.

How did the teacher education course contribute to her understandings of gender relations? She said:

> I think it's been really good. I mean, I've gone from just sort of thinking 'yeah that's not quite fair, I remember those things in school', to being able to read about it, learn about it, watch it and then do something about it. I mean it has been effective, hasn't it? The only thing is with some people I just don't know--how can you have gone through all of this and still think 'oh yeah, big deal'. Because, like every year, they'll sort of reintroduce it, but it's not to say that we haven't or we shouldn't have been dealing with the issues in between. That'll come up again like 'it's third year now, so we want to talk about it again' and I'm like 'I've been waiting for this, you know? How do we put it all together? How do we implement a curriculum?' And other people are still like 'here we go again!' (Interview 95: 5)

Christine's commitment and willingness to take on the ideas about gender relations and educational practices, presented over the four year course, stands in contrast to others such as Jennifer. Like Leah, she can talk about the students who feel there is 'too much talk ... not enough action'.
In her final comments, Christine, like Marlene seems to recognise the importance of finding or building support for change within the larger school community. She also ponders the lack of commitment from other teachers to issues of gender relations. She said:

> Why aren't there more people out there who care? {laughs}. [...] I'm just desperate to get in there and practice it. What sort of support networks are there? It's really annoying in a school when you don't have a lot of help, support or backup, you know, where do you go? Things like that, I know there's lots of resources, I know that they have centres here and there [...] but, if I'm a teacher and I'm in there and I want to do something,

who's going to help me sort of thing? And a lot of it I think will just come with practice, I hope. (Interview 95: 6)

Discussion

Throughout the project, we have tried to listen to individual student voices. We have tried to discern emerging and recurring themes both within individual responses and also across various groups of students. How we group and regroup the different student voices tends to shift and change as we focus and refocus on different discourses. There is a sense of clarity at times, a sense of flux at other times. What do we and what should we pay heed to? Is it their achievements in understanding the ideas that we view as important? Is it the commonalities of experiences shared by some? Is it the ways in which they take up different, but recognisable positions within liberal, radical, socialist or poststructuralist feminisms? Do we celebrate the depth of understanding and commitment brought to the issues by students such as Marlene, Leah and Christine? Do we credit students such as Alex and Naomi for their openness to new ideas and willingness to learn? Do we give credit to those such as Jennifer who resist seeing gender relations as a significant educational issue--because even resistance matters in terms of analysing how and where the course--and our approaches--might improve? Where do we begin?

First of all, on the basis of the comments from these eight students, most of them appear to demonstrate an awareness of ways in which gender relations are constituted in/through their own lives. Even Jennifer, although refusing gender as an educational issue, cites the fact that she 'gets along better with males' as a significant factor in her 'understandings' of gender. At least this is a starting point for engaging in dialogue with them concerning gender relations.

Perhaps, more significantly, of the eight students, all but Jennifer are able to 'problematise' gender relations, albeit from a wide range of different positions. That current gender relations are in part no longer viewed by these students as 'normal' 'natural', or taken for granted and indeed, that constructs of masculinity have been questioned along with constructs of femininity we see as some measure of success. Yet, the ways in which the various students 'make sense' of gender relations and of the part that educational institutions play in constituting 'appropriate' relations, presents many challenges for us as researchers and as teachers.

We have already highlighted a number of these in the preceding discussion of data, for example, the difficulties in making visible the ways in which power and gender relations intersect, often--but not always--to the detriment of women; the concern expressed by a number of female students concerning the well-being of their male colleagues, and the difficulties of providing enough practical experiences to explore theories of gender relations and enough theory to understand, and reflect on

practices. For us this last dilemma is contained in the title of this paper, 'too much talk, not enough action.'

Gender and power relationships.
Different feminist theories conceptualise the ways in which power and gender interrelate in very different ways and propose different approaches for change based on these conceptualisations. In hindsight, we felt that too little time and attention was given within the course to the many ways of 'making sense' of how individual and collective constructions of gender and power are played out within education. The liberal feminist discourse of equal access to economic, educational, social and political opportunities, and the commitment to 'free choice' and individual potential is probably the most widespread and best understood feminist discourse, with 'traces' of this theory found within a number of students comments. However, this theory does not adequately explain the predominance of particular groups of men in decision making and powerful positions across the culture. Whilst radical, socialist and poststructuralist feminisms offer a better analysis of links between particular constructs of masculinity and the ways in which power is exercised, and perhaps would have been worth exploring with students, we remain doubtful that simply presenting the 'facts' does much to change or challenge deeply held beliefs and values.

Jane Gaskell highlights the importance of reflecting on experiences as a basis for changing understandings. This is particularly true when trying to explore a concept as complex and sophisticated as 'power'. Gaskell (1992: 137-8) says:

> The relationship between changing concepts and changing power relations is a dynamic and complex one. Concepts about how the world actually works are located in one's experience of the world. Simply explaining that things can be different will not change the mind of a young woman whose experiences convinces her that they cannot be. She would be unwise to jettison her own experience of the world in favour of what she is told by an expert... But experience is not apprehended directly. It is apprehended through a set of concepts and understandings, an ideology, that makes sense of it. Changing these concepts can change the meaning of 'experience'. So social science and critical, social pedagogy can contribute to change. A change in concepts occurs most easily when one's own life provides experiences that can be seen as evidence for change.

Leah, because of her own lived experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination understood how power relations informed gender. Naomi was able to comment on her experiences in the work place hierarchy. Challenging the ways masculinity, femininity and power relations are constructed was important for both Christine and Marlene as regards their own identities as teachers and as parents. Using such student based experiences, getting other students to reflect, comment, and critique their

own examples might offer a richer, more relevant way for these future teachers to begin to understand the dynamic, complex and challenging ways to 'make sense' of power and gender.

As Gaskell (1992: 138) writes: 'Life is not static, power is not a thing but a relation that is constantly negotiated.' Using the case studies within this paper is one way that we will begin to work with students to reflect on and consider how they also negotiate power relationships.

Additionally, much of the work done throughout the course to raise student awareness and to skill them in strategies to explore gender relations has focused on individualistic classroom practice. While we acknowledge this is an extremely important concern for student-teachers, gender and power relations are not limited to classroom practice but are constituted and reconstituted in other practices of schooling as well, including relations among staff and the ways in which schools operate and are organised. Marlene and Christine in their comments were well aware of these aspects of power and gender. Most students however rarely have the opportunity to explore these processes. While they are often asked to comment on the culture of the school they worked in, there was little if any exploration of the ways in which power relations in school inform gender relations. When such discussion and debriefing does take place after teaching rounds, it seems to happen because of the commitment of the individual teacher educator rather than because it is an inbuilt part of the course.

'But what about the men?'

Another challenge for us was the recurring comments about the males within the course. These usually took the form of worry over male discomfort when gender relations was the focus of lectures, workshops, tutorials and discussions; an anxiety that these particular males might feel 'blamed' for the injustice found within gender relations; or concern that boys/men might somehow miss out if too much attention is given to girls/women. A corollary to this construction of masculinity as uncomfortable, needy or blameless was that of the feminine as nurturing, protective and anxious about the well being of males. Initially, in the first interviews, we paid little attention to these comments, believing that 'in time' the young women would come to understand that the males were capable of expressing their own needs, that laying 'blame' for inequitable relationships was not the purpose of focussing on gender relations and that renegotiating gender and power relations would benefit everyone, not only women.

However, these concerns continued to be expressed, so they were obviously of significance to a number of young women. Trying to make sense of this, we did ask male lecturers to lead and participate actively in discussions and course work on gender in an attempt to alleviate what we saw as the young women's anxiety over possibly offending males in the

course, and their fear of retribution. However, this approach did not seem to even be noted by those students who had suggested it.

Perhaps, we need to take account of the age of these young women, and understand that establishing heterosexual relationships based on the 'romantic ideal of love' is strongly desired and deeply important for many women in this age group; therefore, the need to be seen by men as desirable and attractive (versus the 'frightening' image of the rabid feminist with the hairy armpits) ** could account for the anxiety and concern expressed by some of the female students.

We wonder if there is also something of a patronising attitude toward the young men in the course to be found in these women's comments--as if because these young men have chosen to take up a non-traditional occupation, they are 'lacking' in their understandings of appropriate masculinity and so need protection, special attention, concern and care. This then, enables the young women to demonstrate their own constructions of 'feminine' in traditional ways of nurturing, 'mothering' the males. Why do certain women assume that men are emotionally unable to communicate their own needs and wants? Again, providing space to explore these ideas within the coeducational group might have alleviated some concern. Alternatively, giving Alex a voice to speak about his commitment to gender issues, and to acknowledge as well, his feelings of being in a minority may have addressed the issues raised by the young women. Having the data now makes this possible as a starting point for future classes.

Clearly, because this was raised again and again, the ways in which gender relations were being constructed through the course itself needed to be taken seriously, and examined. Ignoring the women's comments did not do justice to their real concerns.

'Too mueh talk, not enough action.'

Over the course of this research project, in the student interviews and in the annual questionnaires, students frequently asked for practical gender inclusive strategies for use in the classroom. We aimed to take account of this expressed need when we offered lectures, workshop sessions, tutorials, and contract work. We gave them strategies. However, such strategies may be understood as answers in themselves , eg., 'if I do this, then I am gender inclusive and I don't need to worry any more--as long as I use the strategy'. This 'band-aid' approach to change may not enable students to achieve a deeper analysis of how their own and their students' understandings of 'appropriate' gender relations constitute and are constituted in part, by schooling practices. Indeed, such specific strategies may close down the deeper analysis needed to change the dynamics of the relationships in classrooms. That is, while hand-outs of questions and guidelines provide a starting point for some of the student teachers to develop better planning procedures, how do these work to challenge children's constructions of gender? Without a process of monitoring,

trialing, evaluating, and reflecting on practices, change in students' understandings concerning gender may only be superficial. Such 'ownership' of pedagogy and curriculum needs to be made an explicit part of the course. We needed to talk much more overtly about what our own purposes were, and additionally, we as teacher educators also need to monitor, evaluate and reflect on our own practices. This research project was one means of enabling us to do so.

One of the motivating factors for the longitudinal study was the belief on the part of the research team that a focus on how gender relations are constituted and reconstituted through schooling practices was an essential and mandatory part of the teacher education curriculum. In order to adequately prepare new teachers to deal with the ongoing gender relations in schools and in classrooms, it was vital that the feminist research and teaching practices were addressed in an ongoing way over the four year Bachelor of Education (Primary) course. We as teacher educators saw it as both a commitment to adequately preparing our students and an obligation to ensure that they had the experience of considering their own values and beliefs as regards gender relations.

However, in the process of exploring how to best engage students with the issues of gender relations, what has become clear to us is that our own commitment as feminists and our own understandings and experiences of what is 'possible' and 'necessary' in terms of change, sometimes (often?) made us 'hard of hearing' when it came to our students. Understanding how and why our students took up different positions within the discursive practices of gender was sometimes a struggle for us, since we often relied on the 'logic' of appealing to their sense of fairness, and we perhaps too often presumed certain prior understandings concerning gender relations, when many of them defined the 'problem' in very different ways than we did.

Jane Flax (1990: 52) highlights this difficulty when she says:

> In our attempts to correct arbitrary (and gendered) distinctions, feminists often end up reproducing them. Feminist discourse is full of contradictory and irreconcilable conceptions of the nature of our social relations...The positing of these conceptions such that only one perspective can be "correct" (or properly feminist) reveals, among other things, the embeddedness of feminist theory in the very social processes we are trying to critique and our need for more systematic and self conscious theoretical practice.

Revisiting the interviews with these eight students, as they spoke with us at different times over the duration of the project, helped us to better understand the ways in which they struggled, resisted, challenged, endorsed or sought to make sense of the ideas and beliefs we presented to them as part of their teacher education; how they related such ideas to

their own backgrounds and experiences, the insights they offered us made us much more aware of the multiplicities and contradictions we all live with as regards gender relations. It also has helped us to become more reflective concerning our own practices.

We remain committed to the importance of changing gender relations in and through education. We are encouraged by the energy, thoughtfulness and honesty of the students with whom we worked. We wish to acknowledge the ways in which they have taught us. We would like to assure them, in Ruth Coulter's (1995: 47) words about first year teachers, that:

> The uncertainties they feel, the odds they face, the victories they achieve, the setbacks they suffer are part of the experiences that must inform the efforts of women's movement activists, teacher educators..... and others committed to anti-sexist education.

Notes

* We have edited the lengthy interviews to focus on the responses to those questions which are the subject of this paper. While we have omitted some comments, we have endeavoured to ensure that we have not misrepresented the students' ideas. We have also edited for clarity, cutting repetitions and the ubiquitous 'you know' and 'I think I mean', etc.

** This interpretation was expressed by a mature age fourth year student who gave us feedback on the paper.

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